DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 998 CE 049 277

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TITLE Education for Tomorrow's Vocational Teachers. Overview. ERIC Digest No. 67.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 87
CONTRACT 400-84-0011
NOTE 4p.; Document contains small print.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Needs; *Futures (of Society); Needs Assessment; State of the Art Reviews; *Teacher Education; Teacher Qualifications; *Teacher Responsibility; Teacher Role; *Vocational Education; *Vocational Education Teachers
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

Being an effective vocational teacher today means having knowledge and/or experience in four areas: a specific skill area; instructional planning, implementation, and evaluation; classroom and laboratory management; and occupational experience. Tomorrow's vocational teachers will need to be competent in all of these areas, but they will also need to develop skills in areas that may seem distant from their primary teaching duties. The need to help students develop employability skills and higher-order thinking skills is becoming more evident. Vocational teachers will be called upon with increasing frequency to address individual needs in their classroom. Teachers will have to manage experiential learning programs, both in and out of the classroom. Teachers will likely be expected to become more involved in public relations work, and they will face increasing demands from the standpoint of keeping up to date in their specialties and professional development. The Holmes Group report, "Tomorrow's Teachers," and the Carnegie Forum report, "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century," have outlined similar proposals for reforming teacher education. Many of these proposals (for example, creating a national board of standards and relating teacher incentives to student performance) have raised serious debate. Regardless of the outcome, it is likely that change in vocational teacher education will come about, not only because of the reform reports but also because of other pressures within the education community. The final effects of the reform movement will likely be felt in the next decade. (MN)

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EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW'S VOCATIONAL TEACHERS

Overview

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OVERVIEW

ERIC DIGEST NO. 67

Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW'S VOCATIONAL TEACHERS

Today's graduating or beginning vocational teachers will spend most of their teaching lives in the 21st century. Although it is little more than a decade away, the 21st century carries some connotation of a time when our lives (and our schools) will be very different from what they are now. This Digest discusses some of the duties teachers will face in and out of the future classroom. It also covers the recommendations of the Holmes Group report, "Tomorrow's Teachers" and the Carnegie Forum paper, "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century" and discusses the implications of these reports for vocational teacher education.

Future Duties of Vocational Teachers

Vocational teachers in today's classrooms have multiple responsibilities that continually require more knowledge and experience. According to Milanovich (1986), being an effective vocational teacher today means having knowledge and/or experience in four areas: a specific skill area; instructional planning, implementation, and evaluation; classroom and laboratory management; and occupational experience. Tomorrow's vocational teachers will need to have competency in all of these areas; they will also need to develop skills in areas seemingly distant from their primary duty, teaching. What kinds of duties will teachers have in the year 2000?

First, vocational teachers will be expected to teach, but what will be the content? Clearly, job-specific skills for entry-level employment will continue as a learning need. It may be less obvious that employability concepts (e.g., promptness, neatness) and basic skills are also learning needs, and for many students, they are best taught in vocational classes where they can immediately be applied to work. Increasingly, teachers are told that students must also acquire higher order thinking skills (Crain 1987).

Second, vocational instructors must address individual needs in the classroom. They will need to work with special educators and administrators to help students with disabilities learn alongside their peers. Some students without outward disabilities will also require remedial help. In addition, vocational teachers must meet the needs of academic-track students who may take vocational classes. The teacher must be sensitive to the need to challenge, but not overwhelm, all students.

Vocational teachers will also manage experiential learning programs in the future. Some programs will be internal—such as operating a small store or a simulated office—and will require extensive coordination. Others will be external and may require teachers to recruit employers, set up contractual agreements, or coach students in interview techniques. Teachers will need similar skills as advisors to vocational student groups.

The public image of vocational education will be of great concern to vocational teachers as it affects both student recruitment and job placement. Public relations work for teachers may include speaking before community groups, preparing press releases, and organizing a program-wide open house.

Another responsibility that will fall heavily on vocational teachers is keeping up to date. Advances in instructional technology are not difficult to follow—inservice workshops frequently focus on this topic—but technological changes in the workplace are more important to vocational education. If teachers do not keep current with these changes, programs quickly become dated and graduates must be retrained or worse, they cannot find employment. In addition to technology, teachers must keep up with workplace trends and customs (e.g., women in nontraditional occupations, intrapreneuring) (Milanovich 1986).

All teachers will be increasingly responsible for their own professional development. Although many inservice education opportunities exist, the vocational teacher must choose not only what best fits a busy schedule but also what fits his or her development needs (Adams et al. 1987).

The Teacher Education Reports

"Accountability" is the buzzword of the national call for educational reform. The demand for accountability means that instructors must work toward improved performance. Their education should help them with this task.

Two recent reports attempting to plan the reform of teacher education are **Tomorrow's Teachers** (Holmes Group 1986) and **A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century** (Carnegie Forum 1986). Recommendations from these two reports attempt to reintroduce "excellence" into teacher education in all content areas. The Holmes Group, in particular, has invited several major teacher education institutions to join in implementing these recommendations (Miller 1987).

The goals of the Holmes Group report include the following:

- Teacher proficiency in subjects and skills taught
- Recognizing differences in knowledge, skill, and commitment
- Creating entry standards
- Connecting teacher education programs to schools
- Improving the work environment.

The following Carnegie Forum goals are very similar:

- Creating a national board of standards
- Making the school a more professional environment
- Restructuring the teaching force
- Requiring a bachelor's degree as a prerequisite to professional teaching programs
- Developing a professional curriculum for the master of teaching degree
- Preparing minority youth as teachers
- Relating teacher incentives to student performance and providing necessary resources
- Making teacher salaries competitive with those of other professionals. (Adams et al. 1987)

Implications of the Reports for Vocational Teacher Education

Implementation of recommendations from the Holmes and Carnegie reports would mean that teachers would have a master's degree (and thus would have completed 5 years of

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postsecondary education) before they would be fully certified professionals. A mandatory 5-year certification program will have effects on teacher education student recruitment.

A survey of 715 member institutions, undertaken by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, found that fewer than 30 percent of those reporting made attempts at student recruitment. The schools that did recruit students limited their contacts almost entirely to high school students (Lynch 1986). College student recruitment may have been considered too late in the past, since those pursuing education must start taking classes early to fit in all requirements in 4 years.

Under the revised program, students' decision to teach would not have to be made so early since most teaching classes will take place in the fifth year. Thus, recruitment by teacher education programs in general might take place later, when student commitment to teaching may be stronger and retention may be improved.

However, in the area of vocational teacher education, the best students—those who know vocational content—may choose a well-paying industrial job after a 1- or 2-year postsecondary vocational program instead of going to college, especially for 5 years. If all recruitment efforts are deferred until college, this important population would be entirely missed. It has been found that those who enter vocational teacher education seem to have been attracted to that subject by a perceived option to enter industry if they find teaching unsatisfactory, a positive early experience with a vocational program, and the opportunity to be associated with vocational youth organizations. This information may be useful in recruiting high quality students to be vocational teachers (Lynch 1986).

The work experience requirement is the major difference between general and vocational-technical teacher education (Milanovich 1986). The importance of occupational experience must not be undervalued when considering implementation of the report recommendations. In fact, several vocational subject areas (e.g., health education) do not currently rely on university teacher education programs for teachers, but use teachers educated through worksite-based programs (Lynch 1986).

Vocational education is an applied area; thus, teachers must be able to apply their knowledge. Milanovich (1986) states that the current trend is to document students' work experience by having previous (or current) employers verify hours of work and job responsibilities. It has not yet been determined when is the best time to complete work experience within the teacher's educational experience. It will be important to resolve this issue before implementing a 5-year program (Crain 1987).

A final issue that must be addressed is whether it is appropriate for vocational teacher education to limit itself to one educational delivery and certification model. Traditionally, teachers have been certified after completing a required course of study, generally leading to a bachelor's degree. More recently in some states, prospective teachers are required to pass tests that prove their competency before they can be certified. With the emphasis on competency tests and professional standards, the reform reports seem to advocate decreasing flexibility in the model for teacher education.

Finch (1986) points out that aspiring vocational teachers do not always come directly from school to teaching and recommends that some flexibility be built into the system. Keeping entry options somewhat open will be extremely important to avoid a teacher shortage, especially if teacher education programs stretch to 5 years and enrollment rates decrease.

A Future Vision

It is likely that change in vocational teacher education will come about as a result of the reform reports and other pressures within the education community. The final effects of this movement will probably be felt within the next decade. According to Miller (1987), most vocational teacher educators are dedicated to reform but do not wish to lose enrollments; thus, they have decided to wait and see what will happen. Miller predicts that one attractive option could include a "noncertificate" bachelor's degree that would allow some limited teaching experience before the teaching certificate is obtained. However, he concludes that there are many workable alternative responses to educational reform and that future research should concentrate on identifying these.

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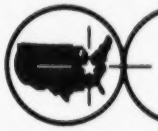
This ERIC Digest was developed in 1987 by Cheryl Harrison, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. NIE-C-400-84-0011. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.



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